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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Revised estimates for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic related to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic related to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (A/70/726 and Corr.1). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information, concluding with written responses received on 22 February 2016.

2. By its resolution 2165 (2014), the Security Council decided to establish (for a period of 180 days) a mechanism to monitor, with the consent of the relevant neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic, the loading of all humanitarian relief consignments of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners at the relevant United Nations facilities. The mechanism would also monitor any subsequent opening of the consignments by the customs authorities of the relevant neighbouring countries at certain border crossings with Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, with notification to the Syrian authorities, in order to confirm the humanitarian nature of the relief consignments.[1]

3. The Security Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for an initial period of 12 months until 10 January 2016 in its resolution 2191 (2014), followed by a second renewed mandate for a period of 12 months until 10 January 2017 in its resolution 2258 (2015).

4. The proposed revised estimates, issued in relation to resolution 2258 (2015) for the current mandate period of the Monitoring Mechanism (10 January 2016 to

[1] The border crossings with the Syrian Arab Republic are: Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa (border with Turkey), Al-Ramtha (border with Jordan) and Al Yarubiyah (border with Iraq). The Al Yarubiyah border crossing is not monitored presently owing to the security situation in Iraq.

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10 January 2017), amount to $4,323,600 under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, and $341,300 under section 36, Staff assessment. The amount would be charged against the contingency fund for the biennium 2016-2017 (see A/70/726/Corr.1). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a table comparing the resource requirements under the commitment authority for 2015 ($7.2 million), the expenditures in 2015 ($5.7 million) and the revised estimate for 2016 ($4.3 million) (see annex).

Staffing requirements

5. The proposed staffing complement for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for 2016 would consist of 43 general temporary assistance positions, including 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 4 P-4, 4 P-3, 3 P-2, 5 National Officers, 15 Local level and 9 United Nations Volunteers (see A/70/726, para. 20 and annex I).

6. Compared with the 57 positions that were established in 2015, the staffing complement for 2016 reflects the following net decrease of 14 positions: 16 positions are proposed to be abolished (1 D-1, 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3, 3 P-2, 5 Local level and 3 United Nations Volunteers) and 2 positions for National Officers are proposed to be established. It is also proposed that one position of Director of the Monitoring Mechanism be reclassified from D-2 to D-1, and one position of Special Assistant to the Director be reclassified from P-3 to P-2.

7. The amount of $3,127,800 would provide for salaries ($2,110,800), common staff costs ($946,000) and overtime ($71,000) of the 43 positions with a forecasted vacancy rate of 18 per cent. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the forecasted vacancy rate takes into account the proposed reduction in staffing from 57 to 43 positions. The Advisory Committee was also informed that of the 43 positions, the 8 positions for deployment to Iraq (1 Team Leader, P-4; 1 Monitoring Officer, P-3; 2 Monitoring Officers, United Nations Volunteers; 1 Security Officer, National Officer; 1 Administrative Assistant, Local level; and 2 Drivers, Local level) are currently vacant and would remain vacant until the security situation in Iraq improves.

Non-staffing requirements

8. The Advisory Committee was informed that the main non-staffing requirements are:

(a) General operating expenses: the amount of $468,100 would provide for rental of premises for the offices in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq ($263,800), communications, including local and long-distance phone calls and satellite phone subscriptions ($96,000), and other expenses;

(b) Travel of staff: the amount of $299,300 would provide for the travel of staff between the offices in Gaziantep, Turkey, Amman and Dohuq, Iraq, for administrative support during peak periods and meetings as well as for the travel of the Director for meetings in New York, Geneva, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Lebanon ($113,300); and local travel ($186,000) which would cover the daily subsistence allowances of the Monitoring Officers and the Drivers when they travel to the borders for day trips lasting more than 10 hours or for overnight trips;

(c) Grants and contributions: the amount of $149,700 would cover the cost of various services, including for support from the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) for the recruitment and administration of staff, the issuance of identity cards, requests for visas and vehicle registration and other administrative procedures including residency permits, payroll management and the issuance of contracts ($95,000) and remote mission support provided by the Service for Geospatial Information and Telecommunications Technologies ($41,300). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the budgeted requirements for UNDP services amount to $58,600 in Turkey, $21,600 in Jordan and $14,800 in Iraq, and the requirement under the Service for Geospatial Information and Telecommunications Technologies relates to the support of information technology and communications provided by the Global Service Centre to the three offices of the Monitoring Mechanism in Gaziantep, Amman and Dohuq.

Mandate implementation

9. With regard to the activity of the Monitoring Mechanism, the Advisory Committee was informed that all trucks (6,046 as at 31 January 2016) in the United Nations cross-border consignments were monitored and verified for their humanitarian nature, and that the Monitoring Mechanism has not found any discrepancies between the declared consignments and the contents of the trucks.

10. The Advisory Committee was also further informed that the Monitoring Mechanism has introduced innovative ways to improve and streamline monitoring, including the use of technology and equipment such as tamper-evident labels, security mirrors, seals, ladders, cameras, portable scanners and metal detectors. The Advisory Committee was also informed that, as a result, one monitor is now able to oversee the cross-loading of two or more trucks simultaneously, as opposed to the initial requirement of two monitors per truck. That has enabled the Monitoring Mechanism to effectively monitor a larger number of trucks using a reduced team.

11. On a related matter, the Secretary-General indicates in his report that, owing to the precarious security situation, the Monitoring Mechanism has yet to establish a presence in Iraq and deployment is not envisaged in the immediate future. Should the situation improve, however, the Monitoring Mechanism is ready to deploy quickly (see A/70/726, para. 8). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Monitoring Mechanism has made contingency arrangements should circumstances change, and has also obtained the consent of the Iraqi authorities for the establishment of a presence, should the need arise. The Monitoring Mechanism has also identified specific staff members and pre-positioned vehicles and other equipment in the event that the Al Yarubiyah crossing is used. However, no staff, equipment or vehicles are presently deployed to Iraq.

12. The Advisory Committee was informed that, on the basis of those arrangements and past experience, the Monitoring Mechanism is confident that the resources proposed for the period of the mandate are sufficient should the number of trucks increase. With regard to, in particular, the downgrading of the Director's position from D-2 to D-1, the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the tasks of strategic oversight, advocacy and communication that were undertaken by the Director at the D-2 level are now embedded in the mandate of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator based in Amman.

The use of revised estimates

13. The Advisory Committee notes that the Security Council, in its resolution 2258 (2015), decided to extend the mandate of the Monitoring Mechanism to 10 January 2017. However, the relevant revised estimates were issued on 10 February 2016, one month into the new mandate period. The Advisory Committee has already raised that timeliness issue in a memo to the Secretary-General dated 4 March 2015 and trusts that a comprehensive solution can be found. The Advisory Committee notes, for example, that the mandates of the special political missions have different renewal dates, yet their budgets are presented for a full 12 months on the assumption that they will be renewed by the Security Council.

14. **Considering that the mandate of the Monitoring Mechanism, established in 2014, had already been renewed once, the Advisory Committee is of the view that a second yearly renewal could have been anticipated and that the relevant budget requirements could have been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The Advisory Committee recalls paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 62/236, in which the Assembly noted with concern the piecemeal approach to the budget process and requested the Secretary-General, for all future proposed programme budgets, to take the necessary steps to avoid such a piecemeal approach to the budget process and ensure the fullest possible picture of the Organization's requirements for future bienniums.**

Conclusion

15. **Subject to its comments above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Approve the additional resources in the amount of $4,323,600 (net of staff assessment);**

(b) **Appropriate an amount of $4,323,600 (net of staff assessment) under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, to be charged against the contingency fund for the biennium 2016-2017;**

(c) **Appropriate an additional amount of $341,300 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.**

Annex

Summary of resources for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, 2015-2016

(United States dollars)

	Commitment authority	*Expenditures*	*Estimated resource requirements*
	10 January to 31 December 2015	*1 January to 31 December 2015*	*1 January 2016 to 10 January 2017*
I. Other staff costs			
General temporary assistance	4 804 900	3 391 009	3 127 800
Subtotal (I)	**4 804 900**	**3 391 009**	**3 127 800**
II. Consultants			
Consultant fees	13 000	41 851	7 900
Consultant travel	10 100	9 964	4 200
Subtotal (II)	**23 100**	**51 815**	**12 100**
III. Travel of staff			
Official travel of staff	187 300	580 308	113 300
Local travel	271 400	31 883	186 000
Subtotal (III)	**458 700**	**612 191**	**299 300**
IV. Hospitality			
Hospitality	6 000	10	4 000
Subtotal (IV)	**6 000**	**10**	**4 000**
V. Contractual services			
External printing	10 000	2 543	4 500
External translation	10 000	252	–
Training	45 900	35 220	45 100
Conferences	4 900		6 300
Other contractual services	12 500	13 314	12 000
Subtotal (V)	**83 300**	**51 328**	**67 900**
VI. General operating expenses			
Rental of premises	447 400	611 399	263 800
Minor alteration to premises	30 000	19 427	7 000
Communications	170 100	117 992	96 000
Maintenance of office equipment	6 000	2 308	3 000
Maintenance of vehicles	53 300	14 945	41 400
Freight and related costs	29 900	56 477	4 300
Local transportation	12 000	20 665	9 600
General insurance	43 600	31 772	43 000
Other miscellaneous services	17 000	2 226	–
Subtotal (VI)	**809 300**	**877 211**	**468 100**

	Commitment authority	*Expenditures*	*Estimated resource requirements*
	10 January to 31 December 2015	*1 January to 31 December 2015*	*1 January 2016 to 10 January 2017*
VII. Supplies and materials			
Stationery and office supplies	30 800	28 737	24 800
Petrol, oil, lubricants	75 100	54 446	62 200
Other supplies	13 800	40 818	15 400
Subtotal (VII)	**119 700**	**124 002**	**102 400**
VIII. Furniture and equipment			
Office furniture and equipment	17 500	113 314	15 300
Information technology equipment	88 800	46 597	10 000
Acquisition of software	8 100	8 667	10 300
Vehicles	239 300	250 931	–
Communications equipment	30 500	21 333	45 400
Security and safety equipment	179 100	25 974	11 300
Other equipment	3 600	41	–
Subtotal (VIII)	**566 900**	**466 856**	**92 300**
IX. Grants and contributions			
Contributions to joint administrative activities	237 600	4 821	54 700
United Nations Development Programme country office cost recovery	85 000	130 281	95 000
Subtotal (IX)	**322 600**	**135 102**	**149 700**
Net requirements	**7 194 500**	**5 709 524**	**4 323 600**